



Seven additional probable influenza A H1N1 (swine flu) cases identified

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health announces there are 7 additional probable cases of influenza A H1N1 (swine flu) identified on the afternoon of May 5, all from Madison County. As of May 5 at 6:30 p.m. Alabama had 25 cases, four of which have been confirmed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In addition to the previously reported 4 confirmed cases, there are an additional 21 probable cases. Of all probable and confirmed cases, 21 individuals are residents of Madison County, 1 of Montgomery County, 1 of Jefferson County, 1 of Pike County and 1 of Shelby County.

Of the 21 cases in Madison County, 20 are children under 13 years of age and there is one adult elementary school teacher. The median age of all 25 cases is 7 years of age. The onset of symptoms of the first case of influenza A H1N1 in Alabama was April 22.

CDC now recommends implementation of measures that focus on keeping all students, faculty and staff with symptoms of influenza out of schools and child care facilities during their period of illness when they are potentially infectious to others.

Students and faculty with influenza-like illness should stay home and not attend school or go into the community except to seek medical care for at least seven days, even if symptoms resolve sooner. The child with symptoms should return to school or day care only after being well for at least 24 hours. Students or staff who appear to have influenza-like illness at arrival or become ill during a school day should be isolated promptly in a room separate from other students and sent home.

The Alabama Department of Public Health does not recommend cancelling large group events based on concerns of H1N1 influenza. Individuals should try to curtail the spread of influenza by realizing the virus is circulating in the population. Individuals who are ill should not attend group events to avoid spreading the virus to others. Persons with underlying medical conditions which would put them at greater potential risk are also advised to avoid group events.

At-risk groups of persons with medical complications of A H1N1 infections include:

- Children less than 5 years old;

- Persons aged 65 years or older;
- Children and adolescents (less than 18 years) who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy and who might be at risk for experiencing Reye syndrome after influenza virus infection;
- Pregnant women;
- Adults and children who have chronic pulmonary, cardiovascular, hepatic, hematological, neurologic, neuromuscular, or metabolic disorders;
- Adults and children who have immunosuppression (including immunosuppression caused by medications or by HIV);
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities.

Prescription antiviral drugs such as Tamiflu and Relenza provide effective treatment and should be taken within the first 48 hours of illness. All persons are reminded to follow these precautions:

- Cover your cough or sneeze with a sleeve or tissue.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective.
- Avoid touching your mouth, eyes and nose with your hands.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to avoid infecting them. Patients experiencing severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, should call their health care provider.

The symptoms of H1N1 influenza are similar to the symptoms of traditional influenza and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with H1N1 influenza. Ill persons should voluntarily isolate themselves from others for seven days after they experience symptoms. Close contacts should limit their contact with others for a period of seven days from the time they were exposed.

The incubation period from the moment of exposure to H1N1 influenza until symptoms develop is two to seven days. Individuals are infectious to others one day before until seven days after symptoms develop. Persons who develop symptoms of respiratory illness should contact their medical provider who can arrange for tests to determine whether the disease is due to H1N1 flu.

For information about H1N1 influenza, please visit www.adph.org.